

A. AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as indicated hereinafter.

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-implemented method for determining an amount to be billed to a customer for the use of computing resources, the method comprising:

determining usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during a specified period of time, of a set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer, wherein over time, computing resources may be de-allocated from the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer and additional computing resources may be allocated to the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer from a plurality of computing resources; and

in a computer system determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data wherein, the value data ~~[[that]]~~ specifies a number of service units that each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources is capable of providing per unit time.
2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:

the usage data indicates usage, during the specified period of time, of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, and

the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer

based upon the usage of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources during the specified period of time and the value data.

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:
the usage data specifies, for each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, an amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time, and
the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time.
4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 3, wherein the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time and the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time, the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time and an amount to be charged per service unit.
5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value

data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data, the value data and a reservation fee for reserving the set of one or more computing resources.

6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 5, wherein the reservation fee includes a fee for reserving for the customer other computing resources from the plurality of computing resources that are not included in the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer.
7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:
the method further comprises determining additional usage data that indicates usage, by
the customer during the specified period of time, of one or more additional
computing resources from the plurality of computing resources, and
the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage
data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer
based upon the usage data, the value data, the additional usage data and
additional value data wherein the value data [[that]] specifies a number of
service units that each of the one or more additional computing resources is
capable of providing per unit time.
8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the set of one
or more computing resources comprise an initial computing resource configuration.

9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise a virtual server farm.
10. (CANCELED)
11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim [[10]] 1, wherein one or more computing resources includes one or more processors.
12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more storage resources.
13. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 12, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more volatile storage devices.
14. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more non-volatile storage resources.
15. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 14, where in the one or more non-volatile storage resources include one or more disks.
16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more computer software resources.

17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more communications link resources.
18. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 17, wherein the one or more communications link resources includes one or more Internet connections.
19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable medium carrying instructions for determining an amount to bill a customer for the use of computing resources, the instructions-including instructions which, when executed by one or more processors in a computer_system, cause:
- determining usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during a specified period of time, of a set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer, wherein over time, computing resources may be de-allocated from the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer and additional computing resources may be allocated to the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer from a plurality of computing resources; and
- determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data wherein the value [[that]] specifies a number of service units that each computing resources from the set of one or more computing resources is capable of providing per unit time.

20. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein:
- the usage data indicates usage, during the specified period of time, of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, and
- the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources during the specified period of time and the value data.
21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein:
- the usage data specifies, for each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, an amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time, and
- the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time.
22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 21, wherein the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit

time and the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time, the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time and an amount to be charged per service unit.

23. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data, the value data and a reservation fee for reserving the set of one or more computing resources.

24. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, wherein the reservation fee includes a fee for reserving for the customer other computing resources from the plurality of computing resources that are not included in the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer.

25. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein:
the computer-readable medium includes one or more additional instructions which,
when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the step of determining additional usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during the specified period of time, of one or more additional

computing resources from the plurality of computing resources, and
the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage
data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer
based upon the usage data, the value data, the additional usage data and
additional value data wherein the value data [[that]] specifies a number of
service units that each of the one or more additional computing resources is
capable of providing per unit time.

26. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19,
wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise an initial computing
resource configuration.
27. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19,
wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise a virtual server farm.
28. (CANCELED)
29. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim
[[28]] 19, wherein one or more computing resources includes one or more processors.
30. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19,
wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more storage resources.

31. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 30, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more volatile storage devices.
32. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more non-volatile storage resources.
33. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 32, where in the one or more non-volatile storage resources include one or more disks.
34. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more computer software resources.
35. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more communications link resources.
36. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 35, wherein the one or more communications link resources includes one or more Internet connections.
37. (CANCELED)
38. (CANCELED)

39. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A billing apparatus for determining an amount to bill a customer comprising:

a memory configured to store usage data and value data, wherein the usage data

indicates usage, by the customer during a specified period of time, of a set of

one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer,

wherein over time, computing resources may be de-allocated from the set of

one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer and

additional computing resources may be allocated to the set of one or more

computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer from a plurality of

computing resources and wherein the value data specifies a number of service

units that each computing resource from the set of one or more computing

resources is capable of providing per unit time; and

a billing mechanism communicatively coupled to the memory and configured to

determine the amount to bill to the customer based upon both the usage data

and the value data.

40. (CANCELED)

41. (ORIGINAL) The billing apparatus recited in Claim 28, further comprising a memory configured to store the usage data and the value data.